

## **ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES**

*May 5th, 2020*

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday May 5th, 2020 at 7:02pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member, Sarah Carrier were present. Interim Recreation Director Robert Jefferson and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Members of the Public: Adria Arch, Elaine Blackman, and Beth Melofchik were also present.

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

- **Open Forum (Public Comment)**

Ms. Mayer asked if anyone in attendance had public comment to share. Ms. Melofchik responded and took the opportunity to speak to the Commission about Robbins Farm. She stated that there are currently numerous holes on the field, which appear to be dug by dogs. Ms. Melofchik recommended that the Recreation Department/DPW place cones on these holes to avoid any injuries to members of the public.

Ms. Melofchik stated that at the northeast corner of the property, there is a colony of Japanese Knotweed. This very invasive species can grow up to 6 feet tall and is very hard to remove. Ms. Melofchik recommended that the DPW remove the invasive while it is still in its current state. Ms. Melofchik also informed the Commission of a cluster on the Spy Pond property, located near the northern edge of the field by the Boys and Girls Club. Ms. Mayer informed Ms. Melofchik that she can submit these type of requests via the Town website using the Request/Answer Center.

- **Correspondence Received (MRP Art -Adria Arch, Social Distancing, Metal Detector Use – Tim Salerno)**

Ms. Mayer stated that the Recreation Department received emails regarding art installations at Menotomy Rocks Park. Mr. Jefferson responded by saying that he visited the property to look at the art installations and took pictures of them. These pictures were sent out to the Commission prior to the meeting.

Ms. Mayer asked Adria Arch to speak about these installations. Ms. Arch stated that she walks in the park frequently and had the ambition to install these installations. Ms. Arch sincerely apologized that she placed the art without going through the public process for permission. This was a project that she completed previously and believed that it might bring joy to park goers during the current situation with COVID-19.

Ms. Arch asked if there was any possibility of placing the art installation back up. Ms. Mayer asked Ms. Arch what art she would be looking to install and for how long. She is hoping that these could be placed back up for several weeks. Ms. Arch stated that the permission to reinstall the signs would be greatly appreciated. She is also looking at alternative placement locations in Town, such as the bike path.

Ms. Rothenberg suggested that starting fresh and placing the signs in a new location may be the best option. Placing the art along the bike path might be better for the community. Ms. Canniff agrees that Ms. Arch had the right intentions when placing the art without permission. Ms. Arch stated that Katherine Shozawa placed an art installation last October and that it is currently not in great condition and should be taken down. Ms. Carrier responded that previous Recreation Director, Stacey Mulroy, approved this project. Ms. Mayer stated that approved art installations typically do have time frames for placement. Ms. Arch thanked the Commission for addressing this topic. The Commission thanked Ms. Arch for joining the meeting, and for her time and efforts.

Ms. Mayer stated that a suggestion was received by Recreation Staff member, Maria Day, about implementing a one-way route around the pond at Menotomy Rocks Park. The suggestion was made in hopes that a one-way route would help with social distancing.. Ms. Canniff is unsure if the Commission could even enforce this and believes that it could lead to other suggestions/issues. Ms. Rothenberg stated that Fresh Pond in Cambridge has placed arrows around the pond to help with the flow of pedestrian traffic for social distancing. Ms. Rothenberg believes that it could be a good idea to implement arrows around the Reservoir and other locations around Town. Ms. Canniff responded that the Commission should inform the Town Manager of this suggestion and that it could be a possible option for the Town to implement. Mr. Walker and Mr. Lasker both agreed. Mr. Jefferson stated he get in touch with the Town Manager regarding this, and that there may be locations in Town where this may help with social distancing.

Ms. Mayer stated that the next item on the agenda was received from Tim Salerno, regarding the use of metal detectors in Town parks. She followed up by saying that metal detectors are allowed in Town parks, but digging is not allowed. Mr. Jefferson continued by saying that there is no formal policy on this though. He asked the Commission for more direction regarding this. Ms. Mayer stated the Town Park Bylaws have a section regarding the defacing of parks and property.

- Current Expectations for Field Use

Ms. Mayer stated that the Commission previously discussed the topic of field use in regard to the original May 4<sup>th</sup> opening date. This date has been extended by the State until at least May 18<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Mayer asked Mr. Jefferson what the plans of field user groups are at this time. Mr. Jefferson responded that the youth soccer (Arlington Soccer Club) season, along with the spring seasons for high school sports, have been cancelled. Mr. Jefferson has not spoken with representatives from youth lacrosse or baseball yet, but believes that all spring user groups' seasons are cancelled. Mr. Jefferson stated current closures include playgrounds, tennis courts, and sports fields. Town parks are still open. Mr. Jefferson asked the Commission about their thoughts on open space use and the removal of the fence at Robbins Farm. Mr. Jefferson stated that the grass at Robbins Farm field is taking and in better shape. Mr. Jefferson has a meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup> with the original construction company from the project, DPW, and several others to discuss the condition of the field at Robbins Farm and possible removal of the fence. He will provide more information regarding this to the Commission after this meeting.

Ms. Mayer stated the guidance remains that individuals need to be using social distancing practices and cannot be congregating in parks. She asked if there was a policy regarding the playing of organized games on field space at this time. Mr. Jefferson stated this is correct and there is a policy regarding organized games. He followed up by stating that the Commission needs a plan regarding field use for when things start to open up. Ms. Mayer agreed, stating that she believes we could start seeing teams having informal practice and groups meeting.

Ms. Canniff stated she would have a problem if organized sports programs in the Town began conducting events or practices since schools are closed. Mr. Lasker believes just passive recreation should be allowed until the Town hears more guidelines from the State. Ms. Mayer agreed that the Commission and Town will need to follow guidelines from the State level. Ms. Rothenberg stated that the Commission had no input regarding the current limitations in the parks. The decision regarding usage will ultimately come from the State and/or Town.

Ms. Rothenberg is looking for more information regarding the field at Robbins Farm and how the meeting goes in relation to the removal of the fence. Ms. Mayer stated if the recommendation is made to keep the fence up, then it should stay up as long as there is no need for usage. Mr. Jefferson questioned how they should proceed if the recommendation is that the field is ready and the fence can come down. Ms. Mayer believes that if the recommendation is for the fence to come down, then it should. Ms. Rothenberg agreed

with this. Ms. Canniff asked if the removal of the fence should be approved by the Town Manager first. Mr. Lasker agreed with this as well, but shared his biggest concern is implementing a long-term maintenance plan for the field at Robbins Farm. This field is different from other fields in Town. His goal is that the Robbins Farm meeting provides more feedback and a plan regarding maintenance. Mr. Jefferson stated that DPW is ultimately responsible for taking care of the fields and field maintenance. Representatives from DPW will be present at the meeting at Robbins Farm

#### Discussion about Recreation concerns moving forward - Update from MRPA

Mr. Vaillette reported on updates regarding current and future Recreation Department programs, including summer camp. Credits have been issued in MyRec to individuals who were registered in classes that were missed due to the closure. Refunds have also been issued to all participants that were registered in programs that have been cancelled. Currently, all programs with class dates through June 7<sup>th</sup> have been cancelled.

Mr. Vaillette stated that he has been joining in on the weekly MRPA (Massachusetts Recreation & Parks Association) Zoom meetings. These meetings are with staff members from other recreation departments in the MRPA Northeast Region. Discussion topics have included the overall impact of COVID-19 on recreation departments in the area, budgets, staffing, and beach operations. The main discussion point has been summer camp operations. Mr. Vaillette stated like Arlington, departments are preparing for summer as usual while taking into consideration possible policies and regulations that may be implemented.

Mr. Vaillette stated that the MRPA is in the process of collecting information from each department regarding the impacts of COVID-19. MRPA is hoping that the State considers camp programs essential and that they are able to open in some capacity/timeframe.

Mr. Jefferson stated that he has scheduled a meeting with Town Manager regarding summer camp and that the decision regarding camps is ultimately going to come from the State level. Mr. Jefferson also reported that registration for all programs, including summer camp, is currently on hold until May 18<sup>th</sup>. They will be reassessing this once more guidance is available.

#### Updates for Robbins Farm, Poet's Tennis Courts, and Playgrounds Assessment

Mr. Jefferson, as previously mentioned, will be meeting at Robbins Farm on May 6<sup>th</sup>. He also stated that there are plans in place to improve the area around the tennis courts at Poets. Improvements would include hydro seeding and landscaping. Funding has been set aside for these improvements, which would make the area safer and more appealing.

Mr. Jefferson reported an update on the playground assessment completed by the department. DPW and Parks Department staff has been working in a limited capacity and in shifts. This has limited the work that has been completed at the playgrounds. Mr. Jefferson stated that there has been a good amount of tree work completed. The mulch issue, however, has not been address due to the limit in staffing. Assessment work has been impacted by COVID-19 and been temporarily put on hold.

- Capital Projects Update for Reservoir, Lussiano playground and Wellington Park

Ms. Mayer asked if there were any updates on the Reservoir Phase 1 Project. Mr. Jefferson reported that he had met with the contractor, architects, and DPW recently. He stated that most of the items have been installed in the pump house. The Town is still waiting for Eversource to upgrade the power supply that is needed. Dredging at the Reservoir was completed today. The Department has been told there is still a target date of June 1<sup>st</sup> for completion of this phase. He reported that for Phase 2, KZLA has been contacted, and the firm is being sent the contract for the project. KZLA is in the process of reviewing the master plan and has started asking questions. Phase 2 is ready to go. Ms. Mayer asked about bid pricing and if KZLA came in at a lower amount. Mr. Jefferson stated that KZLA's original bid was at \$293,000, but was reduced to \$284,000

during contract discussions. Weston and Sampson's bid came in at \$300,000, but was lowered to \$285,000 with a familiarity discount. Stantec's bid for the project came in at \$274,000.

Ms. Mayer stated that updates would be provided on the North Union playground project on May 21<sup>st</sup>. She asked the Commission if there were any questions on this at this time. No questions were asked at this time.

Ms. Rothenberg gave an update on the Wellington Park project. She stated that a public meeting was held last week. Phase 3 design was presented at this time. This phase includes the addition of natural seating areas, benches, picnic tables, and vegetation. Ms. Rothenberg stated this phase will have a quick timeline due to CDBG funding deadlines and usage by the end of June.

Mr. Lasker asked if the timeline was in relation to only design or if they needed to start construction. Ms. Mayer stated the CDBG funding was limited to design. Funding for construction would be through CPA funding that has not been approved yet. Other funding will be received through grants including through Mystic River Watershed Association and Judy Record Conservation Fund.

#### Permit Requests (On Hold Until At Least May 15, 2020)

All Field Permits through Arlington Recreation are currently on hold until at least May 15th. Mr. Jefferson stated that the Department has been receiving calls daily regarding what fields and facilities are open. Program registration is on hold until at least May 18<sup>th</sup>.

#### Director and Other Personnel Updates

Mr. Jefferson gave an update on Department staffing. With regard to the Recreation Director search, Mr. Jefferson reported that the interview panel discussed the possibility of bring back (2) candidates for additional interviews following the final round. Ultimately, the interview panel recommended (1) finalist for the position to the Town Manager. Mr. Jefferson is current waiting to hear back from the Town Manager regarding the offer that was made to the chosen candidate.

Ms. Mayer stated that the interview panel came to a unanimous decision on the candidate. Ms. Canniff requested that the Commissioner members be made aware of the hiring as soon as possible. There are currently several unfilled Department vacancies which have helped with funding, including Assistant Recreation Director and Rink Manager. The Program Supervisor position was also open for about (7) months.

Ms. Canniff asked if the new Rink Manager appointment has been announced yet. Mr. Jefferson stated that it has not been announced yet. The individual is an internal hire and a start date has not been determined yet.

- Approval of Minutes (April 14<sup>th</sup> and April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020)

Ms. Mayer brought up approval of minutes. Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to approve the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for April 14<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Canniff seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call to vote to approve the minutes for the April 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes. All (5) Commissioners responded yes, approving the minutes.

Ms. Rothenberg noted that on the April 23<sup>rd</sup> minutes, Zink is spelled "Zinc" in the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph from the bottom on the last page. This will be amended. Ms. Mayer made note that it is the Park and Recreation Commission, not just Recreation Commission. Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to approve the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes with amendments for April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Lasker seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call vote to approve the minutes for the April 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting Minutes. All (5) Commissioners responded yes, approving the minutes.

- Next Meetings

Ms. Mayer stated that the next Park and Recreation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> and will most likely be online via Zoom.

- Comments and Items For Future Meetings

Ms. Canniff had no comment and is happy with how things are moving forward. Mr. Lasker is curious, once KZLA is under contract, about how the Commission will proceed with the project. Will there be a kick off to start of the project? Ms. Mayer stated this will be discussed during the next meeting on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Rothenberg stated she had no questions and was all set. Mr. Walker had no comments and was all set. Ms. Carrier no comment; all set.

Mr. Jefferson wanted to quickly make the Commission aware of a call from Mike Rademachar regarding a lights issue at Buzzell Field. One of the light stations recently fell down, possibly hit by a vehicle. Mr. Jefferson stated that they are trying to get a replacement pole and light, but the company cannot find any replacements that can be mounted to the current concrete footing. New footings may need to be installed. There are concerns about this because the field is built on a former landfill, which could mean a capital project would be necessary. The field at Buzzell is primarily used for adult softball and while fields are currently not in use, the issue will need to be addressed. This information will be passed on to the new Recreation Director.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:44pm. This motion was seconded by Ms. Canniff. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.